



PROTECTING JOBS AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN NEWCASTLE

Main Committee, Parliament House Canberra

9:50AM, 18 March 2009

Sharon Grierson MP

I want to share with the House an important announcement that was made in my electorate of Newcastle in February – that is, that the Rudd Government has chosen Newcastle as the location for the nation's Clean Energy Innovation Centre. This is a wonderful opportunity for the nation and certainly for our region.

The Centre will support businesses operating in the clean energy field and help them become more innovative, efficient and competitive. It is a \$20 million investment and one that I know is well placed in the city of Newcastle.

We are an area with expertise in energy. We host the CSIRO Energy Flagship, the National Solar Institute, Newcastle University's clean energy work, a very smart, knowledge based manufacturing sector and extensive infrastructure and business support. So Newcastle is now very well positioned to fulfil the needs of any businesses in Australia operating in the clean energy sector.

It is a big investment in our region – \$20 million for the centre over four years – but, as my colleague Kim Carr, the Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, said recently, 'We are doing this because we want to help businesses keep their lights on during these dark economic times.' And in the longer term we do want to see those lights being generated by cleaner energy sources.

I have to digress because yesterday the Lord Mayor of the city of Newcastle rolled out the conservative line that we hear from the opposition every day: that we cannot afford an emissions trading scheme at this time because of potential job losses.

This is simply not so. The emissions trading scheme cannot be deferred. It is essential to the future economic prosperity and wealth of this nation. The CPRS, as



designed by the Rudd Government, will provide substantial assistance to my electorate to support the jobs of today. It will provide free permits to our emissions intensive trade-exposed industries, and we have plenty of them – aluminium, steel, energy generation and coal.

It will provide targeted assistance to businesses as well as community sector organisations, workers and communities. Adjustment funds will support major sectors that are exposed and there is a Special Adjustment Fund available too.

The ETS is designed to deliver reforms and to project jobs and help transition Australia to a low-pollution economy – something we cannot delay.

In my electorate, the Rudd Government is doing everything to protect the jobs of today. It has invested \$580 million into the coal chain, \$300 million-plus has been spent in my electorate over the last year and of course the stimulus package keeps flowing to our economy.

But we are also investing in the jobs of the future - \$25 million for the clean coal; \$5 million to our solar-thermal project, as part of the National Solar Institute, and \$20 million for the Clean Energy Innovation Centre.

The potential of the renewable energy sector is huge – last year alone it generated \$5.7 billion in sales and nearly \$400 million in exports.

Unfortunately, the debate about the ETS is being simplified to a situation where it is apparently a choice between the environment and jobs. This is not so. It is about protecting jobs now and creating jobs for the future, and increasing the prosperity and wealth of this nation.

Addressing the potential costs of climate change to the region is a job that must be done, but in the long run the cost of inaction will far outweigh the cost of decisive action now. This is an issue that requires true leadership and strong resolve from all those involved throughout the Newcastle area.